

# The Briefing



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## Editorial: Approaching God

[Sam Freney](http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/authors/sam-freney/) (<http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/authors/sam-freney/>) | 1 May, 2014

Other religions seem to have the edge over us when it comes to looking ‘spiritual’ with regards to prayer. Long strings of colourful flapping flags, or giant wheels that you spin, or rituals in which you face a monument several times a day—Christian prayer seems rather ordinary in comparison.

“But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” ([Matt 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%206.6) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%206.6>))

There’s no set stance; no special formulaic words. (Try simultaneously imitating the poses of prayer described in the Bible, and you’ll see what I mean about stance. See, for example, [1 Kgs 8:44-45](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Kings%208.44-45) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Kings%208.44-45>); [2 Kgs 20:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Kings%2020.2) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Kings%2020.2>); [Dan 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan%206.10) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan%206.10>); [Mark 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2011.25) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2011.25>); [Acts 9:40](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%209.40) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%209.40>); [Eph 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%203.14) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%203.14>); [1 Tim 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim%202.8) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim%202.8>); [Jas 5:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James%205.13-14) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James%205.13-14>)). But Paul ‘wrestles’ in prayer, and prays ‘continually’ for all the churches. There’s plenty of heartfelt emotion on display in Jesus’ prayers ([John 17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2017) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2017>); [Mark 14:32-40](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2014.32-40) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2014.32-40>)). Perhaps, thinking that our own prayer traditions and practices are familiar, comfortable, or even dull, is an indicator, not of the quality of prayer itself, but of our own spiritual state.

The differences between Christian prayer and other traditions actually highlight its magnificence. There's no need for a ritual of set phrases or physical actions—we ourselves can enter the throne room of God. Because we have one who speaks to the creator of the universe in our defence, we can cast our anxieties on someone who cares and can act, rather than casting them to the winds of the mountaintops.

This edition of *the Briefing* is largely concerned with prayer. Andrew Errington writes about the Lord's Prayer, and what Jesus teaches us by it. Rightly, he walks us through not only the content of prayer and what is highlighted as important things to pray for, but also the form and habit of prayer. Mark Dever has also written about Jesus and prayer; this time examining how Mark's gospel depicts Jesus' own practice of prayer. There's great value in seeing how Jesus spoke to his Father, not only as an example that we can learn from, but also (and primarily) as a revelation of who he is and what he came to do. Thirdly, I've written about some of the lies we're tempted to believe about prayer. These misdirections and temptations can easily distract us from taking part in the relationship we have with our Father.

There's also a chapter from an upcoming Matthias Media book on healing, by Scott Blackwell. This excerpt stands as an article in its own right, but also as our more usual discussion of noteworthy books or resources. Scott discusses what God promises in the Bible concerning healing (and what he doesn't), and neatly ties in to the theme of prayer through asking whether our desire for healing is presumption in the face of God.

My prayer at this point? That you'll be encouraged to delight in prayer, to value it afresh... and to just pray.